



EUROPEAN FIRE SPRINKLER NETWORK

May 2008 Report

The May highlight was the Irish Chief Fire Officers' Association conference in Galway, where there was positive interest in sprinklers and a readiness to increase their use. Another question about sprinklers was put to the European Commission and I will visit Brussels in June to follow up with MEPs. Meanwhile preparations are going well for the Copenhagen conference.

Irish CFOA Conference

In May I gave a presentation at the Irish Chief Fire Officers' Association conference in Galway. There was considerable positive interest in sprinklers. A government representative at the conference told me that a review of the Irish fire safety building code will begin in the autumn. He was supportive of new requirements for sprinklers in high-rise buildings and care homes.

Copenhagen Conference

Registrations for the Copenhagen conference are going well. The day before the conference begins there will be an EFSN Technical Committee meeting, followed by an EFSN Council meeting and an IFSA Board meeting. John Dyrby MP of the Danish Parliament will speak at lunchtime on the 25th. I will draft his speech.

Training Seminar

There will be a dry run of the first EFSN online training seminar on 9th June. I have prepared a seminar with the title, "Introduction to sprinklers". We will use the NFSA web infrastructure to give the seminar, which will last for 90 minutes.

European Parliament Question

On 27th May Glenis Willmott MEP submitted the following written question to the European Commission, "The European Parliament's adopted position on the EU's Health and Safety at Work Strategy 2007-2012 (T6-0009/2008) in paragraph 53 called on the Commission to undertake research into the feasibility and benefits both to health and safety at work and to society as a whole of requiring all new buildings intended to be workplaces to install fire sprinklers where it is safe to do so.

Can the Commission provide an update of the plans it has or the progress it is making with the above-mentioned research?"

The European Commission has up to 8 weeks to reply to this question.

Stewart Jackson MP

With Stewart Kidd of BAFSA I met Stewart Jackson MP, the Conservative Party fire spokesman. His party is not in government but is expected to take power by 2010. He asked the “Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what recent representations she has received on the use of sprinklers as fire resistors in warehousing facilities; and if she will make a statement.” As expected he received a stonewalling reply, ending, “we have no plans to revisit this part of the building regulations in the near future.” Stewart Jackson agreed when we met him that indefinite postponement was not the right approach and I will contact him again with information for him to ask a further question.

London Fire Brigade

I met representatives from London Fire Brigade. Following the election of Boris Johnson as Mayor of London there have been some changes to the make-up of the political supervision of LFB. I will arrange to meet the new Chairman of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority, Brian Coleman. Meanwhile LFB is pushing for sprinklers to go into the 2012 Olympic Village. It is planning to write to all Housing Associations and Residential Social Landlords about fire safety and will include information about how sprinklers can help to improve fire safety. LFB will also draft a policy note on fire safety regulation outlining the options to recommend the installation of sprinklers in new and existing care homes to mitigate issues such as inadequate compartmentation, evacuation times or staffing levels. If this approach is successful it could be rolled out across the country. We are being rebuffed by national government on the question of fitting sprinklers in care homes but this approach may be another route to the same result.

BS 9999

BS 9999 Code of practice for fire safety in the design, management and use of buildings received over 900 public comments. I am in the committee which is reviewing those comments and in two more meetings in May we went through those not covered in April. In a final meeting in June we will go over a few points which were deferred.

Next Steps

- 1) Visit MEPs in Brussels.
- 2) Meet Jim Knight, UK Schools Minister.
- 3) Finalise preparations for Copenhagen conference.
- 4) Dry run online seminar.
- 5) Give a presentation at the German Association of Fire Safety Managers, VBBD.
- 6) Complete the review of BS 9999.
- 7) Attend SFPE French Chapter AGM.
- 8) Meet Water UK.